Fundamental Skills for Case Managers

A Self-Study Guide

UNIT I:

ESSENTIAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Center for Health Training

Unit 1: Essential Communication Skills
written by
Nancy Facher, LCSW, MPH

Center for Health Training
614 Grand Ave., Suite 400
Oakland, CA 94610-3523
www.centerforhealthtraining.org
510/835-3700

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UNIT 1: ESSENTIAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Overview and Instructions

This unit focuses on communication, the basis of a good working relationship between case manager and client. Positive communication helps create an environment where the client feels comfortable, safe, and willing to share her/his thoughts, feelings, and goals. This enables the client and case manager to work together to fulfill those goals.

This unit is the first of four units and is divided into six chapters:

1. Developing Relationships
2. Effective Listening
3. Responding with Empathy
4. Confidentiality
5. Interviewing and Assessment
6. Putting It All Together

Each chapter except "Putting It All Together" includes *Learning Objectives, Things to Think About, Guidelines for Practice,* and a number of activities to reinforce the information provided.

Please complete the *Pre-Test* before you begin. As you read through this unit, complete all of the activities and conclude by completing the *Post-Test*.

You will be asked to demonstrate the skills you have learned for your supervisor, either by practicing a role-play or by being observed with a client during an appointment or home visit. Your supervisor will use the *Observation Skills Checklist for Supervisors* at the end of this unit as a guide. Your supervisor will document your completion of this unit using the enclosed *Supervisor Sign-Off Sheet*. Your supervisor will not read your responses – only confirm that you have done the activities and correct your *Post-Test*.

I. Developing Relationships

Learning Objectives:

After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Explain the meaning of resiliency and a "turnaround person"
2. Give three examples of "negative" qualities and how you could view them positively
3. Identify what happens during the three stages of the relationship between client and case manager
4. Identify what impressions you want clients to walk away with after your first meeting
5. Demonstrate what it means to have a neutral stance with clients instead of giving advice
6. Identify at least two of the five key elements that can help case managers be more culturally sensitive
7. Explain if and when it is appropriate for a case manager to share personal feelings
8. Explain the importance of acknowledging differences between the client and yourself

A. Resiliency

This self-study guide emphasizes an approach to working with teens called "building resiliency." The resiliency approach focuses on what clients can do and what their strengths are. It also stresses the vital role that caring adults can play in teens' lives. Research has shown that most at-risk adolescents develop into "competent, confident and caring adults."[1] How do they do this? Through strong relationships with an adult! Caring adults can be what have been called "turnaround people"[2] for troubled teens.

"Turnaround people" can do the following:

- Demonstrate caring, compassion, and respect by looking underneath a teen's negative behavior to see the pain and suffering that contribute to it
- Maintain high expectations by mirroring back the strength that has gotten the teen this far and conveying the idea that "you can make it"
- Provide opportunities to contribute to others and feel needed and important by linking the youth to jobs, activities, or other interests

In this same way, you can let your clients know that you see their strengths and not just their problems. The goal is to communicate a "you can do it" attitude and convey that you believe in them.

Recognizing Your Clients' Strengths

Finding hidden strengths in your clients is an opportunity to shift your perspective of them and look for the positive when only the negative may be apparent. Then you can help them begin shifting their own self-concept.

ACTIVITY: Finding Hidden Strengths

INSTRUCTIONS: Think of a client who is very difficult for you to work with. List two or three of her/his negative qualities. Now take these same qualities, and try to think of them more positively.

Example:

Negative Quality	Reframed Quality
1. Quiet	1. Observer, notices a lot about other people, figures things out for herself.
2. Manipulative	2. Knows how to get what she needs, understands what motivates people, very resilient, won't be victimized, strong, can get the job done.

Negative Quality	Reframed Quality
1. ______________________________	1. ______________________________
______________________________	______________________________
2. ______________________________	2. ______________________________
______________________________	______________________________
3. ______________________________	3. ______________________________
______________________________	______________________________

By seeing clients through a more positive lens, you help them recognize their own strengths. It helps you build your relationships with your clients, because you don't automatically respond critically, and allows you to increase your empathy for them.

Protective Factors

Protective factors are influences in an adolescent's life that help to lessen the impact of risks. Protective factors are also sometimes called resiliency builders.[3] Everyone has positive personal protective factors that can counter other, more negative influences. Personal protective factors can include traits such as having a love of learning, a sense of humor, self-motivation, or creativity. For example, a teen who is able to laugh at her/himself, especially during a difficult situation, may be able to use that humor to weather hard times.

Many youth also have positive environmental protective factors, such as a close-knit family or a teacher with high expectations of them. Young people who feel connected to their school, for instance, or who place a high value on religion and spirituality, are less likely to engage in early sexual activity. Participation in organized sports and in school, community, arts, and religious activities is a key protective factor for early maturing girls.

Case managers can play an important role in building their clients' resiliency by helping them recognize and appreciate both their personal (internal) and environmental (external) protective factors. Case managers can also support the families of their clients in enhancing these protective factors. It is important, however, to pay close attention to the "match" between client and activity. For example, while it is not appropriate to encourage non-religious youth to pray, it is helpful to encourage young people who are involved in their religious institutions to stay involved.

ACTIVITY: Believing in Your Clients

INSTRUCTIONS: This activity will help you reflect on the important people in your life and consider how you can play that role in the lives of your clients. Answer the following questions.

1. Who believed in you when you were a youth?

____

____

2. Did you have any "turnaround people"?

____

____

3. How can you let your clients know that you believe in them?

____

____

4. What personal and environmental protective factors helped you when you were growing up?

____

____

B. Stages of the Relationship

Relationships with your clients go through several stages, and the beginning is often the hardest. One framework to think about it is:[4]

1. The Current State of Affairs
2. The Preferred State of Affairs
3. Strategies for Action

It may take a number of visits to move through each of these stages. It is also possible to move back and forth among the stages throughout your relationship with a client.

In the first stage, "The Current State of Affairs," clients tell you their stories. Often, case managers feel they have so much to get done with their clients that they can't wait and listen to the clients tell their stories. However, waiting and listening are incredibly important tools for building trust and rapport. From hearing their stories, you begin to understand:

- What the issues are as they see them
- How much insight and maturity they possess
- Who their main sources of support are, if any
- Other information that will help you develop a good working relationship

In the second stage, "The Preferred State of Affairs," you assist clients in identifying their goals and developing hope that some of their problems can be solved.

In the third stage, "Strategies for Action," you discuss with your clients what they are willing to do to meet their goals and then help them choose strategies.

C. The First Meeting

Establishing a good impression during your first meeting is critical. With proper thought and preparation, you can set a positive tone for the rest of your relationship. Both you and your client will have feelings about each other. You may have been given information about your client and formed an opinion before meeting her/him. Try to keep an open mind! In the same way, the client may have ideas about who you are and what you can and can't do for her/him. So the slate must be cleared, and you must separate yourself from your assumptions. It's crucial that you use this first meeting to create a warm tone and set appropriate expectations.

Take a moment to think about what kind of impression you want to make. Think of when you started in your job. Who were the people that made strong first impressions? Who were the people that did not? Who were the people that were caring, available, and nonjudgmental? How did they communicate that?

ACTIVITY: Thinking about the First Meeting

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the brief scenario and answer the questions that follow.

Marisol: Marisol has a long history of working with case managers and social workers. Despite this, her life isn't any better, and she feels like she's wasted a lot of time. This is your first visit, and she's not sure how or why you will be any different.

What do you want her to understand about your work together by the end of the visit?

1. ____________________

2. ____________________

What can you say to communicate this?

1. ____________________

2. ____________________

Kimi: Kimi is 13 and has never had a case manager before. She has had little interaction with professionals or anyone outside her home and comes from a culture where problems are kept in the family.

What do you want her to understand about your work together by the end of the visit?

1. ____________________

2. ____________________

What can you say to communicate this?

1. ____________________

2. ____________________

Building Rapport

Rapport is established when the client and the case manager feel comfortable and connected and understand each other easily. Good communication, understanding, and acceptance are all important elements of building rapport.

The first step is helping your clients feel comfortable with you. To do that, you need to be comfortable in your role. If you're nervous, they'll feel it. If you're judgmental, they'll know. The things that help you feel comfortable getting to know someone in your personal life also apply here. Find out:

- What do they do for fun?
- How do they spend their free time?
- What places do they like to go to?
- What do you have in common? Do you know their neighborhood?

This may take only a minute or two, or it may take a little longer, but the payoff is the chance for your client to warm up to you.

Sometimes it takes time to develop rapport. It's important not to hurry. On occasion, case managers may understandably try to take short cuts to create a comfortable relationship. For example, a case manager may want to prove that s/he will be helpful by volunteering to do things for clients that they could do themselves, such as filling out paperwork or making phone calls. Doing things for your clients will not automatically build rapport, but it will set a precedent that you are willing to do things for them rather than help them do things for themselves. Remember, rapport comes from how you are with clients, not what you do for them.

ACTIVITY: Obstacles to Rapport

INSTRUCTIONS: Write three obstacles to building rapport. Examples: feeling in a hurry, distrustful client, nervousness.

1. ______________________________

2. ______________________________

3. ______________________________

Communicating Your Purpose and Role

The client may not know what to expect in the first visit. For example, many clients hear the term "case manager" and think that you see them as a "case" to be "managed." This doesn't make them want to open up right away! It's important to communicate to your clients exactly what you do and that you really want to know them as individuals. Letting your clients know the goals of the program, your role in it, and what they can expect of you will greatly affect how they view your relationship. Clarifying the way you will be working with them can also be an opportunity to demonstrate respect for them and their families. Allow yourself time to practice what you will say, so you can do so in a way that makes them want to connect with you and meet with you again.

ACTIVITY: Communicating What You Have to Offer at the First Meeting

INSTRUCTIONS: Pretend you are meeting a client for the first time and you want to say something to put her/him at ease. Fill in the blanks.

Sometimes people wonder____

and I want you to know ____

Sometimes people have questions or concerns about ________________________

____

After a month or so, I will be able to help you with ________________________

____

I hope that____

____

D. Client-Centered Case Management

In order to build rapport, it's important to see the world from the client's point of view and "start where the client is." You and your client may have different ideas about what is most important to work on. The client might be concerned about work and childcare, while you think that getting a General Equivalency Diploma (GED) is the most important thing for her/him. If you ignore your client and focus only on your concerns, it will be hard to earn the client's trust.

Neutral Stance

No one likes unsolicited advice – especially teens. They will tune out quickly if they feel they are being told what to do. Giving advice indicates that you've decided what is best for them, rather than helping them decide what their options are. Instead, try to take the attitude that they will make good decisions if you help them explore the alternatives and their consequences. After all, clients are in charge of their behavior. You are not responsible for the choices they make. Conveying the idea that they have choices about what they do has multiple benefits. You are adopting a neutral stance, which will help them feel comfortable talking with you and reassure them that they won't be judged. Being neutral is also a way of showing respect for the differences between you and your clients and their families.

Power, Culture, and Other Taboo Subjects

Many clients have had bad experiences with adults. They may have been betrayed, abandoned, neglected, or abused. As a result, they may have no model for thinking that a caring adult can actually help them. They may fear that you are going to tell them what to do. It's important to clarify this up front and distinguish yourself from the other adults in their lives. Think about how you can let your clients know that you are a guide, there to support them and create opportunities with them.

Issues of culture, race, class, sexuality, and authority can create additional barriers to effective communication. Many case managers come from different cultural backgrounds than their clients and speak different first languages. They may fear that these clients will feel uncomfortable talking with them. Sometimes this is true. Clients may feel that the differences make it more difficult for the case manager to understand them.

When working with clients from backgrounds different than your own, consider learning something about their cultures. Try to learn about immigrant or refugee clients' level of assimilation to better understand the struggles they may be going through. Sometimes you truly don't understand the significance of something or you don't respond the way a client would like. But at other times, clients actually prefer to talk to someone from outside their own culture because they believe they won't be subject to the same rules or expectations.

When you start a new relationship with a client, you never know whether s/he will feel that your differences are a help or an obstacle to the relationship. But you can build a relationship with almost anyone if you have good rapport-building skills.

In building your ability to work across all kinds of cultural differences, it's important to:

- Be aware of what the issues are and how these issues may affect your work
- Develop skills in communicating about these differences
- Develop an appreciation for how others are different
- Use cultural knowledge without stereotyping and remain open to the experience of the individual
- Work on any biases that you have

Acknowledging Differences

If you sense there is a real barrier to your communication with the client because of your differences, you need to address it. You might acknowledge the differences by saying, for example, "I know you and I come from different cultures. Sometimes this affects our work together. Since I want to be a very good case manager for you, I'd like to know if something comes up that doesn't feel right. I'm very open to hearing about you and anything you think I don't understand."

Issues that relate to socioeconomic differences, educational level, gender, drugs, and even your power as a professional may also require acknowledgment. Doing so lets your clients know that you are open to talking about what you know and what you don't. It prevents them from stereotyping you and stops you from making assumptions about them. It lets them know that you are open to learning about their specific experience and that you don't presume to know everything about them. Open discussion of these issues also lets them know that they can trust you and that you really care about "what it's like" for them. It's important to make it clear that it's the relationship between you that matters.

ACTIVITY: Acknowledging Differences

INSTRUCTIONS: Complete the following statements indicating you are open to talking about the ways you are different from your client and how this may impact your relationship.

Example: **"As we work together, I will be talking to people at your school and work and from other parts of your life. I will try not to do anything that will affect you without discussing it with you first. I really hope that I can help you have more choices about what happens in your life."**

1. **Your client is an immigrant from a country that you have never heard of. Her English is not very good, and you don't speak her language. You might say:**

   ____

   ____

   ____

2. **Your client is a different gender than you are. You might say:** ____________

   ____

   ____

3. **Your client reads at a fourth-grade level, and her parents are illiterate. People react to you as a very educated person. You might say:** ____________

   ____

   ____

These are some potential differences, but there are many others. Think about what differences you may have with your clients and what you might say to address them.

ACTIVITY: Comfort Zones

INSTRUCTIONS: It's important to figure out what types of client characteristics you have strong opinions about, when you feel pulled to give advice, and what makes you nervous or insecure. Below is a list of a few possible client characteristics. Rate how you react to clients with these characteristics. Circle the characteristic if you think it would be hard for you to be "neutral" and "nonjudgmental" with a client who has this characteristic.

Totally Uncomfortable										Totally Comfortable
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Client:
___ Is on public assistance
___ Uses drugs
___ Is from a different racial group
___ Has had several abortions
___ Speaks a different primary language
___ Doesn't think high school is valuable
___ Is having unprotected sex
___ Has been in jail, boys or girls' ranch, or juvenile hall
___ Is 12 and pregnant
___ Has a father of baby (FOB) who is significantly older
___ Is prostituting herself
___ Is manipulative
___ Is bisexual or questioning her/his sexuality
___ Expresses prejudice
___ Is passive
___ Has been raped

Note which characteristics you circled. It is your professional responsibility to be aware of your feelings and to be sure they do not intrude. We all make judgments, but the key is learning to leave your judgments outside of the client interview.

If your feelings are resulting in discomfort or preventing you from being nonjudgmental with your client, you need to find a way to work on your feelings away from the client. Here are a few suggestions:

- Talk to your supervisor or a colleague about your feelings. Problem-solve with other people about what has worked for them.
- Educate yourself about your client's characteristics. For example, does bisexuality make you nervous because you don't really understand it? Does your client's culture practice traditions you are unfamiliar with?
- Try to understand the cause of your reaction. Is there someone in your family who reminds you of your client? Do your personal beliefs conflict with your client's?

E. Self-Disclosure

In your interactions with clients, you naturally experience emotions. There are varying viewpoints about if and when to disclose these emotions to clients. Some professionals believe that sharing feelings is unprofessional. However, not sharing any feelings at all can create more distance than is necessary and result in missed opportunities. Sharing feelings in a thoughtful, purposeful, and deliberate way can actually deepen the relationship.

If you feel that you've let some feelings out and they may negatively affect the relationship with your client, acknowledge those feelings. State that you know you may have seemed mad or judgmental, but that you realize now that those feelings were about you, not the client, and that you're sorry you let your feelings intrude.

Clients may even ask you about feelings you're having, but unless it is clear that sharing your feelings will be helpful, it's usually better not to. Generally, it's best to share a feeling if:

- A client asks you directly, and you feel comfortable sharing it
- The client would benefit from knowing it
- The client would otherwise feel that you are withholding it unnecessarily

If you honestly evaluate the purpose of sharing your emotions and decide that doing so is in the best interest of the client, it may be appropriate. With experience, you can learn to avoid expressing feelings that are not helpful to clients.[5]

F. Stating Personal Opinions

If you have an opinion, consider how it may affect your client before sharing it. Remember, your opinion may carry more weight because of your position. If it is appropriate, state what you think is going on, and give your client room to reject your idea. This is much more helpful than leaving the client to wonder what you think. That approach leaves the client feeling that you have secret information you're not sharing.

Developing Relationships

Things to Think About

- How do you first find out about a client?
- What does a client first know about you?
- How can you build rapport with each client?
- How can you balance doing paperwork with building rapport and trust?
- How can you set appropriate expectations?
- How can you incorporate a resiliency perspective?
- How can you help clients to identify their internal and external protective factors?
- How do you want to be with your clients?
- How can you work more closely with your colleagues to support each other in developing relationships with your clients?

Guidelines for Practice

- ✯ Prepare well for your first meeting.
- ✯ Keep in mind the kind of first impression you'd like to make.
- ✯ Explain your purpose and role.
- ✯ Start where the client is.
- ✯ Build rapport by exploring your clients' interests.
- ✯ Be warm, but adopt a neutral stance.
- ✯ Let clients know that you are not going to judge them.
- ✯ Allow your clients tell their stories without interruption.
- ✯ Leave time for client questions and concerns.
- ✯ Communicate hope, optimism, and your belief in your clients.
- ✯ Express interest in client strengths and what has enabled them to get this far.
- ✯ Demonstrate respect for the client and her/his family.
- ✯ Acknowledge cultural differences that might affect work.
- ✯ Remember that caring adults do make a difference.

2. Effective Listening

Learning Objectives:
After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Identify and explain three techniques for listening
2. Identify three barriers to good listening
3. Identify two nonverbal cues that show the client you are listening
4. Explain the difference between open-ended and closed-ended questions, and give two examples of each
5. Give two reasons to use the technique of paraphrasing
6. Describe "summarizing" and when to use it

Good communication is the basis of positive relationships with your client. It encourages them to open up to you, so that you can truly help them manage their feelings and address their challenges and concerns. This chapter focuses on one of the essentials of communication: listening.

A. Active Listening

Active listening involves interaction between the case manager and the client. The case manager must try to understand what the client is saying and communicate back those feelings and thoughts so the client knows s/he is being understood. Another term for this type of interaction is "accurate listening." When a case manager is engaged in accurate listening, s/he understands what the client is saying and what her/his thoughts, feelings, and motivations are. The case manager also pays attention to nonverbal cues, such as lack of eye contact or fidgeting. The client, in turn, senses that the case manager is paying attention and is trying to understand.

Because case managers have so many clients, they often feel rushed. However, it is worth taking the extra time to listen and truly understand the specific circumstances of each client. Prompting the client to elaborate enables you to understand the situation more fully and encourages her/him to discover and evaluate possibilities for change.

Body Language

Before you begin talking or listening, it is important to consider the nonverbal cues that you give and receive. Your body language tells your client when you are paying attention, even though you may not be saying anything with words. Your client feels great when they know they have your complete attention!

Body language checklist:

- ❑ Does your posture seem interested, alert, and attentive? Are you leaning forward?
- ❑ Are you looking at the client?
- ❑ Does your voice indicate interest and match the client's emotional expression? Are you speaking at a similar rate and tone of voice?
- ❑ Is the tone of your voice warm and inviting? Harsh and critical?
- ❑ Is your body still? Are you playing with your hair or picking lint off your clothes?
- ❑ Does your facial expression match the emotional tone of what the client is saying?
- ❑ Are you yawning? Fidgeting? Shuffling papers?
- ❑ Are you sitting behind a desk? Answering the phone?
- ❑ Are you playing with the client's baby instead of hearing the client?

Observations about clients' body language:

- What does their body language say about them?
- What kind of eye contact do they make? Are they looking down or directly at you? Do they look away when their mother or partner speaks?
- Are they fast or slow-moving? Do they talk quickly or slowly?
- Do they fidget, or are they calm?
- Do they convey interest? Fear?

ACTIVITY: Observing Body Language

INSTRUCTIONS: **Observe the next two people you interact with and notice how much eye contact they make, when they look away, when they talk, when they get quiet, and how quickly they move. Write down two possible explanations for their body language. *If you feel comfortable, ask them later if your interpretations were correct.***

Body Language of Person 1: ____

Explanation #1: ____

Explanation #2: ____

Body Language of Person 2: ____

Explanation #1: ____

Explanation #2: ____

Techniques for Active Listening

Techniques for active listening include encouraging, asking open-ended questions, asking closed-ended questions, moving from the general to the specific, paraphrasing, and summarizing.

a. **Encouraging**

Purpose: This is how you convey interest and tell your client to continue talking.

To Do This: Give small verbal or nonverbal prompts.

Examples: "Uh-huh." "Go on."

b. **Open-Ended Questions**

Purpose: Open-ended questions are questions that cannot be answered with "yes" or "no" – they require elaboration. These questions encourage the client to talk about experiences and invite specifics. They are typically very general and help you get a broad sense of what's going on.

To Do This: Ask questions that get the client to tell a small story when they answer.

Examples: "Tell me more." "What are your thoughts about . . . ?"

c. **Closed-Ended Questions**

Purpose: Closed-ended questions are questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no" or have a specific answer. These questions are typically used to obtain factual information.

To Do This: Ask a specific question that has only one possible answer or can be answered with "yes" or "no."

Examples: "What time did all this happen?" "Did you go to school today?"

ACTIVITY: Changing the Questions

INSTRUCTIONS: Convert each of the following questions from a closed-ended question to an open-ended question.

Example: **Closed: Do you and your parents get along?**
Converts to: **How do you and your parents get along?**

1. **Closed: Do you like school?**
   Converts to: ______________________________

2. **Closed: Is everything ok with the baby?**
   Converts to: ______________________________

3. **Closed: Do you like breastfeeding?**
   Converts to: ______________________________

4. **Closed: Do you want any information on nutrition?**
   Converts to: ______________________________

d. **Moving from the General to the Specific**

Purpose: Getting more details from the client helps her/him recognize patterns and see where there is room for change. You may have a general sense of the client's situation, but to truly understand what's going on, you need details. It's not enough to know that the client fights with her boyfriend, for example. You need to know more to help her figure out what to do. The specifics enable you to understand her experience and make relevant comments in response.

To Do This: Ask follow-up questions to solicit more information about the particular situation.

Example: "When does the fighting occur? What happens right before? Are there any warning signs? How do you feel before, during, and after the fight? Does anyone else know? What have you tried?"

e. **Paraphrasing**

Purpose: Paraphrasing is restating what the client has said to show that you understand. This gives the client a chance to hear what you are thinking and to correct or clarify what you've said. Paraphrasing is not repeating what the client has said word for word, which can appear condescending.

To Do This: Put what the client says into your own words.

Example: Client: "I don't think I can go to school. How can I leave my baby with a stranger all day?"
Response: "You're not sure you can leave your baby to go to school."

f. **Summarizing**

Purpose: Summarizing affirms what the client has said and shows that you've understood the whole message. Use this technique when the client finishes sharing something to help them see the full picture.

To Do This: Think about all the things the client has said and how they link together. State the overall message, including the relevant parts.

Example: "So, all in all, you think that getting your GED is the next thing you want to do."

ACTIVITY: Accurate Listening

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the following vignette. Then, write exactly what you would say when using the specific techniques listed below.

Vignette: Elizabeth says to you, "Why does my boyfriend keep blaming me every time the baby cries? I'm always responsible, according to him. The baby doesn't even want to go to him. She clings to me. I am tired of all the responsibility. I think if I just left the baby with him, she'd get used to him, and I'd have peace of mind."

Encouraging: ____

____

Open-ended question: ____

____

Closed-ended question: ____

____

Moving from the general to the specific: ____

____

Paraphrasing: ____

____

Summarizing: ____

____

B. Barriers to Listening

Our emotions can get in the way of good listening, and so can our thoughts. Here is a list[6] of unhelpful responses that can happen when listening to clients:

- Daydreaming – losing attention, thoughts wandering
- Labeling – putting the person in a category before hearing the evidence
- Scoring points – relating everything you hear to your own experience
- Mind reading – predicting what the other person is thinking
- Rehearsing – practicing your lines in your head
- Cherrypicking – listening to a key piece of information, then switching off
- Interrupting – being unable to resist giving advice
- Dueling – countering their statements with your own opposing statements, going back and forth between the two of you
- Side-stepping sentiment – countering expressions of emotions with jokes or cliches

ACTIVITY: Observing Yourself as a Listener

INSTRUCTIONS: Next time you are listening to a friend or family member talk about a concern, try to notice how many times you engage in any of the above practices. See how common they are! They're natural, and as long as you know what they are, you can reduce their frequency. Try to determine which ones are typical for you, and think about how to avoid them.

Effective Listening

Things to Think About

- Think of a time when you really felt listened to. What did the listener do that made you feel this way?
- Think of a time when you did not feel listened to when trying to say something very important. What did the listener do that told you s/he wasn't listening?
- What are your own strengths as a listener?
- What are your greatest obstacles as a listener?
- What feelings do you pay attention to in yourself?
- What feelings do you like to ignore in yourself?

Guidelines for Practice

✯ Use active listening techniques.

✯ Use body language that shows interest; note your client's body language.

✯ Listen attentively.

✯ Use open-ended and closed-ended questions strategically, and know their purpose.

✯ Avoid distractions or thoughts that take your attention away.

✯ Focus on what the client is saying and the underlying meaning.

✯ Clarify what your client has said by paraphrasing and summarizing.

3. Responding With Empathy

Learning Objectives:
After completing this chapter, you will be able to:
1. Identify and explain the three components of empathy
2. Define "validating" and "normalizing" feelings
3. Explain the importance of silences
4. Demonstrate how to communicate empathy

Listening accurately is only one part of good communication. The second step is "responding accurately." If you are very specific with your responses and have communicated your understanding of how the client is feeling, you will "accurately" identify her/his thoughts and feelings. This strengthens your relationship by showing the client that you are listening and understand what s/he is saying and feeling. If you accomplish this, then you are using empathy.

Social worker Lawrence Shulman identifies three components of empathy: reaching for feelings, acknowledging feelings, and articulating feelings.[7]

A. Reaching for Feelings

Clients may tell you about an event without mentioning their feelings about it. Sometimes, they may not be aware of their feelings and may need help identifying them. Others may know their feelings but need help talking about them. Helping them reach for feelings moves the conversation to a more emotional level. Here are some ways to do this:

Asking

Purpose: When a client's feelings seem like they are near the surface, asking about them helps the client identify and talk about her/his emotions.

To Do This: Always ask an open-ended question first, such as, "How does that make you feel?" If there is no clear response, you can ask specific questions.

Examples: "Are you feeling angry right now?" "You seem really sad." "I'm wondering if you're hurt."

ACTIVITY: Reaching for Feelings

INSTRUCTIONS: In the following vignette, you can tell the client has feelings, but she has not identified them. Write a statement that reaches for her feelings.

Vignette: **Maria just found out that her mother is very sick. She has already had many losses in her life, and she asks, "Why me? My mother isn't even old. I can't focus, and I feel really mad. I don't even know why she's so sick." She begins to cry. "I'm just a mess. Why is this happening to me?"**

You know that her response to you and her fear about her mother are related, and she's feeling scared and alone. How would you reach for her feelings?

Statement: ____

____

Dealing with Silences

Sometimes it can be uncomfortable for case managers when clients become silent. But silences are key and can be an opportunity to help clients understand their feelings. It's okay to sit with a silence for a while to see what happens. Sometimes a silence means there is a concern or a feeling underneath the surface, and the client needs help putting it into words.

Generally, you will get cues from the client about what s/he is feeling. But if you are uncertain, the best way to know is to ask. "Is this what you're feeling?" "Did I get it right?" you might ask, or, "I'm not sure, but I wonder if you're feeling ______?" It's better to ask about a feeling or guess it incorrectly than to ignore it. Asking is not prying, and ignoring the silence can give the impression that you're not paying attention or that intense feelings scare you away. Sometimes, due to the power differential, the client may accept an interpretation that isn't correct, so it's important to encourage her/him to let you know if you are wrong. If the client does, graciously accept the correction and apologize.

Purpose: To clarify what the client is thinking and feeling.

To Do This: Comment on the silence and your guess as to the feeling that underlies it.

Example:	Case Manager:	"I notice that you're quiet now. It may be really hard to talk about how your boyfriend treats you. What you've been telling me is really hurtful, and I wonder if you're feeling sad or hurt."
	Client:	"No, I'm just really angry at him!"
	Case Manager:	"I am so sorry I got it wrong. I can see how that would make you mad, not sad. Thank you for telling me how it really is for you."

B. Acknowledging Feelings

By acknowledging your clients' feelings, you help them feel less alone and more understood. The three steps for acknowledging feelings are stating the feeling, validating the feeling, and normalizing the feeling.

1. **Stating the feeling**

Purpose: To see whether you understand what clients feel and to help them think about those feelings.

To Do This: Make a statement that acknowledges what the client is feeling.

Example: "It seems to make you furious when I give you information that you don't think is relevant."

2. **Validating**

Purpose: To let clients know that their feelings are understandable. Validating clients' feelings lets them know that you accept their feelings and helps them accept themselves.

To Do This: Make a statement about the situation and how it affects the client.

Example: "I can understand why that seems unfair to you."

3. **Normalizing**

Purpose: To let clients know that what they feel is expected and that there is nothing wrong with them.

To Do This: Make a statement about the situation expressing that their feelings are normal and that it's okay to experience them.

Example: "If that happened to me, I'd be mad too."

ACTIVITY: Acknowledging Feelings

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the following vignette and then fill in the answers in the blanks.

Vignette:[8] **Rose tells you, "My best friend has turned her back on me, and I don't even know why! From the way she acted, I think she has the idea that I've been talking behind her back. I simply have not! This neighborhood is full of gossips who can't mind their own business. She should know that. If she's been listening to those idiots who just want to make trouble, she could at least tell me what's going on."**

State the client's feeling: ____

Validate what the client is feeling: ______________________________________

____

Normalize: ____

____

C. Articulating Feelings

Articulating clients' feelings communicates empathy. Empathy isn't only "putting yourselves in your clients' shoes"; it's also letting them know that you can imagine what it feels like to walk in their shoes.

Purpose: To communicate that you truly understand.

To Do This: Make a statement about how the client is feeling and why s/he might feel that way.

Example: "It seems like you're feeling lonely because you feel that no one is paying attention to you, and you thought you'd get more attention after the baby was born."

CAUTION: If your client has had a traumatic experience, you may not be able to "know" how s/he feels. But you can convey your empathy by trying to imagine how s/he feels.

Example: "That must have been really hard – I can only imagine what that was like for you."

ACTIVITY: Communicating Empathy[9]

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the following vignettes and then fill in the answers in the blanks.

Vignette:[10] **Karina states that her boyfriend started calling her names a few months ago, but she hasn't been able to talk about it up until now. She says, "I've tried to stand up for myself a few times, but he just gets meaner. He hasn't hit me or anything, but I just sit and take it. Do you think he's trying to break up with me?"**

Client's key experience: ____

Key emotions: ____

Statement: It seems like you feel ____________________ because ______________

____

Vignette: **Megan just returned to high school after having her baby. She is having trouble adjusting to life at school and her friends' expectations that everything is just like it was. She speaks openly and seems to be in good spirits. "I had to take the baby with me to a party, and it was pretty strange. At first everyone wanted to hold her, but then they got bored. I had to go home because she started to cry. I had a good time but it's not the same."**

Client's key experience: ____

Key emotions: ____

Statement: It seems like you feel _____________________ because _____________

____

Responding With Empathy

Things to Think About

- How have empathetic listeners affected you when you've needed support?
- What can you relate to about some of your clients' troubles?
- Is it hard to put yourself in your clients' shoes?
- Do you feel uncomfortable talking with your clients about their feelings?

Guidelines for Practice

- ✯ Help your clients identify their core feelings, experiences, and behaviors.
- ✯ Acknowledge their feelings if something is uncomfortable or painful to talk about.
- ✯ Normalize and validate their feelings.
- ✯ Share your understanding of their important experiences and feelings.
- ✯ Share personal feelings appropriately.
- ✯ Be as specific as possible when naming a feeling.
- ✯ Ask for permission to share your interpretations of your clients' feelings, and invite rejection of your ideas when they are wrong.

4. Confidentiality

Learning Objectives:
After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Explain the limits of confidentiality
2. Explain what mandatory reporting is
3. Describe the three instances where the law requires you to break confidentiality
4. Identify what happens when abuse is suspected but not reported
5. Talk more comfortably to clients about confidentiality
6. Identify appropriate action steps in different confidentiality scenarios and the consequences of errors
7. Identify what types of situations require making a report to Children's Protective Service (CPS)

Confidentiality is crucial when providing services to teens. It is your promise that you will not disclose what your clients tell you without their consent unless specifically required to do so by law. Many studies have shown that teens won't use services if they think their confidentiality will be violated. They need to know up front that you're not going to tell their families, their teachers, their boyfriends, or anyone else what they've told you. (You may, however, discuss cases with other case managers or your supervisor without disclosing your clients' identities.) In your work with teens, confidentiality issues will arise in many different and challenging ways.

A. The Limits of Confidentiality

There are times when case managers must go outside their relationships with clients to disclose information that is otherwise confidential. This is called mandatory reporting. As an adult who works with minors, you are required by law to report any suspicion of abuse and neglect to Children's Protective Service (CPS).

Specifically, the law requires that you break confidentiality when:

1. You suspect child abuse (physical or sexual) or neglect of your client or her/his child(ren)
2. The client is gravely disabled, cannot care for her/himself, and has no one to care for her/him
3. The client is in danger of hurting her/himself, the child, or others

Note: This self-study guide is not a comprehensive guide to mandated reporting laws. It is very important that you check with your own agency for its policies, protocols, and guidance regarding mandated reporting.

On occasion, case managers may try to avoid situations that will result in mandated reporting because of the complexity of the process or their concerns about the impact that reporting will have on their clients. They may mistakenly give clients the impression that it is better not to disclose reportable information (about physical or sexual abuse, for example) until they are 18. However, giving clients this message maintains their isolation and may keep them in dangerous situations.

The following table provides guidance on how to avoid confidentiality errors.

B. Confidentiality Errors and their Consequences (table)

Kind of Error	Example	Consequence of Error	What Should Have Been Done
Not explaining confidentiality sufficiently.	Case manager (CM) has reason to suspect abuse or neglect but never discusses mandatory reporting with client.	Client is shocked and feels betrayed when CM reports what client disclosed to CPS.	At first meeting with client, CM explains confidentiality and its limits. Example: "Everything you say stays with me and no one else, unless I think you are a danger to yourself or others, can't care for yourself, or I suspect someone may be hurting you. These things are not confidential."
Not explaining confidentiality sufficiently.	CM speaks with teen's mother on the phone, but hasn't clarified with client that s/he will not reveal information to mother. Mother tells teen she spoke with CM.	Teen loses trust in CM, even though no confidential information was revealed.	CM begins relationship by explaining to client and family that s/he may request information from family, but will never give out confidential information to the family.
Not reporting abuse when identified or suspected.	The teen mom is doing fine in school and at her job, but is seriously neglecting her child. No CPS report is filed.	The neglect continues, and the child is hurt and could be removed from the home. CM is liable and can be prosecuted. The mom doesn't learn responsibility for parenting. The law is broken.	CM files a CPS report because mandated reporters must report any case of "suspected" abuse or neglect. CPS then determines whether abuse or neglect exists. CM shares her concerns and observations with the teen mom and explains why a report was filed.

continued on next page

B. Confidentiality Errors and their Consequences (table) continued

Kind of Error	Example	Consequence of Error	What Should Have Been Done
Failing to explain that CM can get information from family but is only bound to hold the client's information confidential.	CM calls client but teen's mother answers the phone and shares information about client's problems. Mother begs CM not to tell teen, even though it may be appropriate for CM to do so.	Teen loses trust in CM simply for talking with her mother and assumes that her confidentiality has been violated.	CM explains to teen at first visit that CM may have contact with client's family but will not disclose any client information. If family gives information to CM, CM talks about it with client.
Violating client confidentiality.	The teen's parents want information about client. CM tells them what they want to know.	Client feels s/he can no longer trust CM and stops coming to appointments.	CM tells parents that s/he must honor teen client's confidentiality.
Violating client confidentiality.	CM has two clients with same FOB. CM reveals this to one client.	A very complex situation develops as a result of CM's breach of confidentiality.	CM respects confidentiality despite concern for clients' wellbeing and encourages both clients to use protection.
Violating client confidentiality.	Boyfriend calls to find out whether client signed up for GED program, and CM discloses that she has.	Boyfriend goes to GED program and yells at girlfriend for doing something behind his back.	Inquiries about client are answered with the statement, "I don't give out any information about who my clients are or any other information about them. That is all confidential."
Inappropriate interpretation of CPS reporting requirements.	The referring agency indicates that client is in a violent relationship. Client is almost 18, and CM informs her that if she waits until she is 18 to share information about domestic violence, CM will not have to report it.	Client learns she must tolerate abuse and that the system can't be trusted. Her isolation continues.	CM tells client that s/he is aware of the abusive relationship and wants to help client improve her situation. CM states that s/he may have to make a report, but will provide client with referrals for shelter or support as needed.
Talking about client in a public setting.	CM tells supervisor about risks her/his client has. Another client is in waiting room and overhears the whole conversation.	Client discussed loses anonymity, which could result in other damaging consequences. The client who overhears learns that information is not confidential and is reluctant to share.	All conversations about clients take place in more private settings.

ACTIVITY: Confidential Practice

INSTRUCTIONS: Answer the following questions.

1. You have a client with a very controlling parent who is always pressuring you to tell him about what the teen says. How do you handle the parent?

2. You have learned from another case manager that your client's boyfriend is having unprotected sex with other partners. What do you do?

3. What rules does your agency have about confidential practice?

C. *Mandated Reporting of Sexual Activity by Minors to Children's Protective Services or Police in California (table)*

KEY:

- Y Yes, you must make a report if there is **any kind of sexual activity.**
- **Y*** Yes, you must make a report if the minor **is having sexual intercourse,** even if that sexual intercourse is consensual.
- N No, you are not required to make a report.

Age of Client ↓ / Age of Partner →	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
11	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
12	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
13	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
14			N	N	N	N	N	N	N	**Y***	**Y***	**Y***	Y	Y	Y	Y
15				N	N	N	N	N	N	**Y***	**Y***	**Y***	**Y***	Y	Y	Y
16					N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
17						N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
18							N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N

Other sexual activity that must be reported by a mandated reporter:
Mandated reporters must report any sexual activity by a minor — **regardless** of claimed consent by the minor — that is:

- Coerced
- Exploitative
- Based on intimidation

Note: This sheet is not intended to be a complete review of all California child abuse reporting laws. Please review agency protocols and policies with your supervisor to learn how these laws are implemented at your site.

Based on a document by Rebecca Gudeman, JD, MPA, and David Knopf, LCSW, available at http://www.youthlaw.org/AB327.pdf, which was distilled from: *An Analysis of Assembly Bill 327: New California Child Abuse Reporting Requirements for Family Planning Providers,* by Catherine Teare and Abigail English (National Center for Youth Law, May 1998).

ACTIVITY: Reflections on Confidentiality

INSTRUCTIONS: Answer the following questions.

How could you tell a new client about mandatory reporting? ____________________

____

____

____

____

How do you maintain confidentiality? ____

____

____

____

____

Which of these issues is the most challenging for you? Why? ____________________

____

____

____

____

Confidentiality

Things To Think About

- Has a professional helper ever violated your confidentiality?
- How much confidentiality do you think teens should have?
- Do you feel comfortable keeping information from a teen's family?
- How can you get support from your colleagues when you have to make a mandatory report?

Guidelines for Practice

- ✯ Clearly explain confidentiality and its limits to clients and their families.
- ✯ Explain that mandated reporting is both an ethical and legal requirement.
- ✯ Keep any information about teen clients to yourself.
- ✯ Avoid mentioning clients' names in the reception area and other public spaces.
- ✯ Only talk with your supervisor about your clients behind closed doors.
- ✯ Evaluate the effect that sharing information about a client will have on her/him and your work together.
- ✯ Ask permission and get the client's written authorization when you need to share information about her/him.
- ✯ Talk to the client first about parent requests for information.
- ✯ Go to your supervisor with confidentiality questions or conflicts.
- ✯ Seek out support when you have to make a difficult report.

5. Interviewing and Assessment

Learning Objectives:

After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Explain what you can do to prepare for the first interview
2. Identify where and how your agency's client assessment form duplicates the Lodestar
3. Identify difficult questions asked on the Lodestar and techniques for addressing them sensitively
4. Make statements that help you gracefully transition from topic to topic during sessions
5. Give an example of at least one thing you can do to create closure at the end of a difficult session

The primary goal of the initial interview is to get to know your client. However, interviewing can also be a tool for building the relationship between you and your client. By preparing well for the first few sessions, familiarizing yourself with the forms you will be using, and communicating effectively, you can transform what could be a stressful experience for your client into a positive one. The interview becomes a conversation rather than an interrogation. The interview also provides an opportunity to identify and acknowledge your client's strengths and enhance her/his motivation to overcome obstacles.

There are three basic skills case managers use when conducting interviews:

1. Asking questions
2. Responding to answers
3. Transitioning from one topic to the next

A. Advance Preparation

You can help the initial interview go more smoothly by reviewing the intake paperwork in advance and developing a plan for the completing the forms as efficiently as possible. This kind of preparation enables you to streamline the intake process. Consider the following before your interview:

- Are certain questions repeated on more than one form? If so, make a note of it so you can avoid repetition.
- Are there questions on the client assessment form that you can group together or paraphrase for clarity?
- Will you be able to complete some forms after the interview is over by transcribing information you've already gathered?
- Which responses do you need to write down immediately, and which can you remember and record after the interview is over?

B. The Art of Asking Questions

Remember that how you ask questions is more important than what you ask. As you become more familiar with the required forms, you will be able to ask questions without sounding mechanical or like you are giving your client the third degree. Your choice of words and tone of voice can demonstrate your genuine interest in the client and your empathy for what s/he is going through. For example, after hearing a client describe the problems she is coping with at home and school, you might respond, "That's a lot you have going, and you're handling it all. How do you feel about all this?"

Sometimes case managers feel intrusive asking so many questions. However, by using open-ended questions and carefully wording what you say, you can invite several responses with one question. (See Chapter 2, "Effective Listening," for an in-depth discussion of open-ended questions and other active listening techniques.)

Early in the session, your questions should be broad, to encourage the client to open up and give you the big picture about her/his concerns and goals. No one area needs to be pursued in detail at this point. By touching on several areas, you help the client identify which issues s/he wants to focus on. Asking open-ended questions also gives the client control over the order of topics to be discussed.

ACTIVITY: Revisiting Your Client Assessment Form

INSTRUCTIONS: Look at your agency's client assessment form, and highlight all of the specific questions that could be covered with fewer open-ended questions.

Example: **"Do you have a good relationship with your boyfriend?"**
Becomes:
"Tell me more about your relationship with your boyfriend?"

Write your open-ended questions below:

1. ____

2. ____

3. ____

4. ____

5. ____

6. ____

How many questions remain? Now practice asking these closed-ended questions to obtain the remaining information.

C. Responding to the Client's Answers

Normalizing, validating, and reframing are important tools to use during an interview to help clients feel comfortable sharing information with you. See Chapter 3, "Responding with Empathy," for a discussion of these techniques.

D. Prefacing and Transitioning from One Topic to the Next

Based on your client's responses to your open-ended questions, you may have some specific follow-up questions. Preface these inquiries by giving the client a context and reason for the questions and asking permission to proceed. Questions just for the sake of questions can feel intrusive. You might say, "Is it okay if I ask you a couple of specific questions about _____, so I understand?" Or, "I need to ask you a few more questions just to make sure you're safe." Reassuring the client that you must ask these questions of everyone is another way to put her/him at ease.

Since you have a lot of information to obtain, you may need to move the interview along. Again, it's important to explain your actions to the client. Let her/him know that you want to hear more and that you will have more time to listen later. For now, though, ask if it's okay to move on to another subject. Some clients appreciate warnings before transitions. For example, "Let's talk about this for another minute, and then, if it's okay with you, I'd like to learn about some other important topics."

If you are able to, try to link the two topics. If you can't, don't be afraid to make the transition, just explain it. For example, "I know that we don't know each other very well yet, but I can see how well you've dealt with difficult issues in your relationship with your boyfriend. Can I ask you how you're feeling about him right now?"

ACTIVITY: Prefacing

INSTRUCTIONS: Write down what you might say to prepare a client for the following topics:

You are beginning the interview. What do you say?

____

____

You know your client has a history of substance abuse, and you're about to ask about it. What do you say?

____

____

You want to ask about domestic violence in your client's home. How do you preface the question?

____

____

ACTIVITY: Transitions

INSTRUCTIONS: Go through your agency's client assessment form and highlight all the areas where the subject changes. Write down the transitional statements you might use to move from one subject to the next. Practice with a coworker or supervisor by beginning with a question from the form and then using the transitional statement to move to the next one.

Transition 1: ______________________________

____

Transition 2: ______________________________

____

E. Identifying Risk Factors

Assessment is essential to systematically insure that all clients are asked fundamental questions about their history, health, and safety. In assessing your clients, be aware of responses indicating risk factors that need to be addressed immediately, such as suicidality or the intention to harm others. Other risk factors are chronic, like substance abuse or other self-destructive behaviors, and although they deserve your attention, they might not constitute an emergency.

When you identify something that may be a red flag, write yourself a note indicating your concern. You may want to come back to that question later in the interview or stop the interview right away to focus on the issue. Either way, follow-up is very important. Let the client know that you heard what s/he said and that you will definitely come back to it.

F. Closure

By the end of an interview, clients sometimes feel overwhelmed by the challenges and stresses they face. Closure is the process of ending a session without leaving pieces hanging — or leaving your client in an emotionally vulnerable state.

To create closure:

- Give clients warning before their time is up, so they can get control of their emotions.
- Acknowledge clients' feelings and the reasons for them.
- Let them know that you are open to hearing about those painful feelings again. Focus on what they can do in the short-term to feel better. What helps them feel better when they feel this way? What are their plans for the day?
- Leave enough time for clients to put themselves back together so that the ending is not abrupt.
- End your session by summarizing the goals and plans you've discussed and reviewing the agreements you've made.
- Make sure clients receive all of the necessary referrals related to the issues discussed.

In Conclusion

The interview is an opportunity to encourage your client and provide hope. Many clients have felt discouraged and overwhelmed their whole lives. By setting a positive tone in the interview, you can plant the seeds for the positive change that your work together can bring about. If you validate their experiences, acknowledge their strengths, and help them take small steps toward their goals, you can increase your clients' motivation to achieve those goals.

Interviewing and Assessment

Things to Think About

- If you can, find an experienced case manager who barely uses paperwork while conducting an intake, and ask if you can observe her/him. Notice how s/he gets information, and write down any questions that you think are effective.
- When you visit a health care provider or other helping professional, observe how s/he solicits information from you? How does it make you feel?

Guidelines for Practice

- ✯ Prepare for the interview; know your forms.
- ✯ Explain the purpose of your questions.
- ✯ Ask open-ended questions to get the big picture.
- ✯ Use the interview as an opportunity to let your client know you care and can help.
- ✯ Ask for permission to ask sensitive follow-up questions.
- ✯ Carefully transition to new topics.
- ✯ Identify risk factors and address them immediately.
- ✯ Validate your clients' experiences and acknowledge their strengths.
- ✯ Summarize goals and review agreements made.
- ✯ Make necessary referrals.

6. Putting It All Together

In this last activity of Unit 1, you have the opportunity to take what you have learned from each chapter and apply it to a role-play or real-life client contact. This skill-building component of the unit allows your supervisor to observe your new skills, using a checklist as a guide, and give you feedback. It is up to you and your supervisor to decide whether you will be observed during a role-play or an actual client visit.

Before you begin, read through the three vignettes that follow and discuss at least one with your supervisor. Next, try to answer the *Questions for the Case Manager* that follow. You will also want to familiarize yourself with the *Observation Skills Checklist for Supervisors* that your supervisor will use when watching your role-play or client session.

If you are going to do a role-play:
Doing a role-play gives you the chance to practice skills and get feedback from your supervisor before you begin seeing clients. Decide with your supervisor which vignette is appropriate for you. Choose a coworker to play the role of the client. Remember that some of the *Questions for the Case Manager* should be completed before the role-play. Others will need to be answered afterward. Decide how much time you want to complete the role-play. Your supervisor should use the *Observation Skills Checklist for Supervisors* to evaluate your role-play and write down observations. If you or your supervisor is not satisfied with the session, you may decide to do an additional role-play or create your own scenario.

If you are seeing a client:
If you are ready to actually see a client, make arrangements with your supervisor to observe the session. Remember to look over *Questions for the Case Manager* (below) before the session. Your supervisor should evaluate the session using the *Observation Skills Checklist for Supervisors*.

Questions for the Case Manager:

1. How would you prepare for your first meeting with the client?
2. How would you explain your role to the client?
3. What concerns might the client have about you?
4. What differences between you would you acknowledge?
5. What are some of the client's strengths?
6. What would be hard for you about working with this client?
7. What confidentiality issues may arise?
8. Write three open-ended questions that you would use during the intake interview.
9. Write three closed-ended questions that you would use during the intake interview.
10. What risk factors would you need to follow up on?

Vignettes

Marissa (AFLP)

Marissa is a 14-year-old immigrant, in this country for three years. She speaks English at school and Spanish at home. She is the fifth and youngest child in her family, and all of her female siblings have had children already. They all live together in a large house. She is eight months pregnant, and her prenatal care has been spotty. She was referred to you by her nurse practitioner, who is worried about her and very frustrated. She has told Marissa she needs to change her behavior. Marissa knows she was referred and was very quiet over the phone when you talked with her for the first time. You have been told that she is an extrovert and has a lot of friends, although lately she has been too tired to go to school. She has not yet signed up for childcare at her high school, and you don't know whether she is planning on returning to school to receive it. You don't know anything about the FOB except that he is "older."

Richard (AFLP)

Richard is a 17-year-old client who is being transferred to you because his former CM is leaving. He has had a stormy relationship with his CM, and you have been told that he is very difficult and angry. Richard has one child, and his girlfriend is two months pregnant with their second child. Richard lives with two older cousins in a small studio apartment. The former CM has told you that she thinks that this pregnancy was planned, but she is not sure. You know that Richard is very smart and knows about all of the services available. He asked you directly on the phone whether you were going to get him childcare, "since the last case manager promised to do that for me, but she never did."

Jasmine (ASPPP)

Jasmine is 13 years old. She is a good student and doesn't seem to make waves. In fact, in her family she has been ignored, especially compared to several siblings who have gotten into trouble. Her older sister, Erika, is her exact opposite, and they have a very stormy relationship. However, her mother reports that ever since Erika became pregnant, Jasmine has begun to dress in a slightly more sexual way. Erika has also told you that Jasmine is starting to date more, but Jasmine hasn't mentioned a thing. Their mother is always describing Erika as the bad child and Jasmine as capable of no wrong, and you wonder whether there could be more to the picture. You wonder how mature Jasmine is and whether she's engaging in any risky behaviors.

Observation Skills Checklist for Supervisors – Unit 1

Agency ______________________________ Type of session role-play / real session (circle one)

Case Manager _________________________ Supervisor ________________________ Date ________

	Did the Case Manager:	Comments:
❏	Welcome the client and introduce self in a friendly way?	
❏	Establish rapport with the client?	
❏	Introduce supervisor and client to each other, and clearly explain to client the purpose of supervisor's presence in the meeting? (real session)	
❏	Use open body language to show interest?	
❏	Explain the role of the case manager?	
❏	Explain confidentiality and what it means to be a mandated reporter?	
❏	Assess the client's agenda and address her/his concerns?	
❏	Listen attentively?	
❏	Use paraphrasing effectively?	

continued on next page

Observation Skills Checklist for Supervisors – Unit 1 continued

	Did the Case Manager:	Comments:
❑	Give client positive feedback/point out strengths?	
❑	Address sensitive topics with a neutral stance?	
❑	Ask open-ended questions and encourage client to talk?	
❑	Ask difficult questions sensitively and preface them as necessary?	
❑	Acknowledge, validate, and normalize client's feelings appropriately?	
❑	Acknowledge differences as needed?	
❑	Follow up on risk factors identified?	
❑	Summarize session and use closed questions appropriately?	
❑	Review actions/decisions/referrals and the next appointment time?	

Case Manager Strengths: ____

____

Congratulations!

You have completed Unit 1!

Unit 1: Essential Communication Skills – Pre-Test

1. Circle the <u>false</u> statement(s):
   a. Caring adults play a crucial role in fostering resiliency in youth.
   b. Resiliency research has shown that only a small percentage of at-risk adolescents will develop into "competent, confident, caring adults."
   c. "Turnaround" people maintain high expectations and provide opportunities for youth to contribute to others.
   d. Seeing clients through a more positive lens helps clients recognize their own strengths.

2. Circle the <u>true</u> statement(s):
   a. It is important to be aware of how cultural differences may affect your work.
   b. It is important to work on any biases that you may hold.
   c. It is appropriate to give advice to your clients since you have more life experience.
   d. Always share your first impressions fully with clients.

3. Complete the following sentence:
   It is important to take the time to listen to your client's story because....
   a. It is not polite to interrupt.
   b. It is one of the AFLP/ASPPP standards.
   c. Allowing the client to elaborate allows you to understand the situation more fully.
   d. It gives you time to look through your notes while the client is talking.

4. Circle the <u>false</u> statement(s):
   a. Your body language can show clients whether you are paying attention.
   b. It is important to occasionally touch your client during your visit to show you are listening.
   c. A common barrier to good listening is rehearsing – practicing your next lines in your head.
   d. To be a good listener, it is important to avoid distracting habits such as playing with your hair, picking lint off your clothes, etc.

5. Complete the following sentence:
   Paraphrasing means ...
   a. Giving small verbal or nonverbal prompts.
   b. Asking follow-up questions for more information about the particular situation.
   c. Restating what the client has said to show the client that you understand.
   d. Thinking about all the things the client has said and how they link together, and stating the overall message.

6. Which one of the following statements is an example of "normalizing"?
   a. "It seems like you feel sad when you talk about not having enough time with your baby."
   b. "I think most people would have reacted in the same way that you did."
   c. "That was a really mean thing that your friend did!"
   d. "So it sounds like you'd like to have another conversation with your mother to explain to her how you're feeling."

7. Circle the <u>false</u> statement(s):
   a. Silences are key and can be an opportunity for helping the client understand his/her feelings.
   b. Because silence can be uncomfortable for both you and the client, it is important to try and fill the silence by saying something as soon as possible.
   c. Ignoring the silence can give the impression that you're not paying attention or that intense feelings scare you away.
   d. If you're uncertain about why the client is silent, a good way to find out is to ask the client.

8. Circle the <u>false</u> statement(s):
   a. Confidentiality means that you can share information about a client with other staff who are interested.
   b. Confidentiality means that you are not going to give information about your client to her mother, teacher, boyfriend or anyone else without the client's permission.
   c. Confidentiality means that you will do your best to ensure a private space to talk.
   d. Confidentiality means that information you learn about your client from another client should be kept private.

9. Circle the <u>false</u> statement(s):
   a. The law requires that you break confidentiality when clients are in danger of hurting themselves, their children, or others.
   b. The law requires that you break confidentiality when the client has decided to have an abortion and you feel the client's mother should be involved.
   c. The law requires that you break confidentiality when clients are gravely disabled, cannot care for themselves, and have no one to care for them.
   d. The law requires that you break confidentiality when there is suspected child abuse (physical or sexual).

10. True or False (circle one)
    Your client's boyfriend and father of her baby can be physically abusive at times. You know she's very much in love with him and wants to keep the family together. It is okay to tell her that if she waits until she's 18, any information she shares with you about his abuse will not have to be reported to Children's Protective Services (CPS).

11. True or False (circle one)
    Your 14-year-old client is sexually active with a 19-year-old partner. You do not have to report to CPS.

12. True or False (circle one)
    Mandated reporters must report any sexual activity with a minor that appears to be based on intimidation, even if the minor claims to have consented.

13. Circle the <u>false</u> statement(s):
    a. When it comes to relationship-building, how you ask questions is more important than what you ask.
    b. Early in the session, questions should be broad, in order to allow for exploration, opening up, and for getting the big picture.
    c. Touching on several areas will help the client identify for herself or himself areas on which to focus.
    d. If you receive the answer to several questions within one answer, it is still important to ask those questions again to make sure you've covered every question.

14. Circle the <u>true</u> statement(s):
    a. When preparing for an interview, make sure you memorize all of the questions so that you never have to look down at your forms.
    b. When preparing for an interview, give your clients a context for the questions.
    c. When preparing for an interview, prefacing personal questions by using the following kind of statement can by helpful: "I have to ask the following questions of everyone, and some are very personal."

15. Circle the <u>false</u> statement(s):
    a. Closure is only used when your client is leaving the program.
    b. Closure helps the client put herself back together so that the end of the session is not so abrupt.
    c. Closure is the time to summarize the goals and plans you've discussed and review agreements made.
    d. Any necessary referrals may also be discussed during closure.

Unit 1: Essential Communication Skills – Post-Test

1. Circle the false statement(s):
   a. Caring adults play a crucial role in fostering resiliency in youth.
   b. Resiliency research has shown that only a small percentage of at-risk adolescents will develop into "competent, confident, caring adults."
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   d. Seeing clients through a more positive lens helps clients recognize their own strengths.

2. Circle the true statement(s):
   a. It is important to be aware of how cultural differences may affect your work.
   b. It is important to work on any biases that you may hold.
   c. It is appropriate to give advice to your clients since you have more life experience.
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   It is important to take the time to listen to your client's story because....
   a. It is not polite to interrupt.
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   Paraphrasing means ...
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   a. "It seems like you feel sad when you talk about not having enough time with your baby."
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Unit 1: Essential Communication Skills – Supervisor Sign-Off Sheet

Case Manager's Name ________________________________
Supervisor's Name __________________________________
Agency ____
Supervisor's Phone __________________________________ Date ___________

Activity	Page #	Supervisor Initials	Date Completed
Developing Relationships			
Finding Hidden Strengths	4		
Believing in Your Clients	6		
Thinking about the First Meeting	8		
Obstacles to Rapport	9		
Communicating What You Have to Offer at the First Meeting	10		
Acknowledging Differences	13		
Comfort Zones	14		
Effective Listening			
Observing Body Language	18		
Changing the Questions	20		
Accurate Listening	22		
Observing Yourself as a Listener	23		
Responding With Empathy			
Reaching for Feelings	26		
Acknowledging Feelings	28		
Communicating Empathy	29		
Confidentiality			
Confidential Practice	34		
Reflections on Confidentiality	36		
Interviewing and Assessment			
Revisiting Your Client Assessment Form	41		
Prefacing	42		
Transitions	43		
Putting It All Together – Supervisor Observation	47		

Endnotes

[1] E. Werner and R. Smith, Overcoming the Odds: High-Risk Children from Birth to Adulthood (New York: Cornell University Press, 1982). Also Werner and Smith, Vulnerable but Invincible: A Longitudinal Study of Resilient Children and Youth (New York: Adams, Bannister and Cox, 1982; 1989).

[2] B. Benard, "Turnaround People and Places: Moving from Risk to Resilience," in The Strengths Perspective In Social Work Practice, ed. D. Saleebey, 3rd ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2002), pp. 213-227

.

[3] Nan Henderson and Associates, The Resiliency Training Program: A Training of Trainers (1997).

[4] G. Egan, Exercises in Helping Skills: A Manual to Accompany the Skilled Helper, 6th ed. (Brooks/Cole Publishing, 1998).

[5] L. Shulman, "A Study of Practice Skill," in Social Work, vol. 23 (1978), pp. 274-281.

[6] J. Townsend, The Interviewer's Pocket Book (Alresford: Management Pocket Books, 1987).

[7] See note 5 above.

[8] See note 4 above.

[9] See note 4 above.

[10] See note 4 above.